2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

593

Christmas Eve feast, Easter festivities, and the ceremonies on St. George's Day.

443
432
366

Roughly two-thirds of adult Dragalevtsy was in Sofia on an average Friday. On Thursday evenings the village was already bubbling with excitement. The wagons had already been loaded. All that was necessary in the dim light on Friday morning was the yoking of the sleepy oxen. Soon cart after cart would creak heavily down from the village, overtaking those peasants who cheerfully made the long trip by foot. By the time sleepy city-dwellers were breakfasting, the village was well on its way to the outside world.

Once in Sofia there were four possible destinations for the peasant wagon: the cattle market, the mill, the big curb market, or the *Bezisten Pazar* (another smaller market).

The cattle market was located across the city, back of the railroad station, near the municipal cemetery. This market was owned and managed by the municipality. Every peasant before passing into the enclosure with a beast had to pay the tax of ten leva. The sun had already grown warm by the time the Dragalevtsy peasant and his wife passed through side streets to this square, packed with bargaining, shouting men and noisy animals. Usually the women sat outside the square in their wagons loaded with pumpkins and peppers in season, though once in a while a woman accompanied her husband through the bargaining and sale of the animal. The bright blue uniforms of the police were very much in evidence in this dusty confusion, where hard bargains sometimes led to fist fights. At the east end, gypsies raced their not too spirited horses up and down to prove to would-be purchasers the absence of defects. At the northeast side, the red-eyed water buffaloes and their dirty little black calves moved restlessly because of biting flies. To the northwest, along the iron rail the oxen ruminated.

Through the tumult and dust wandered the sellers of *boza* (fermented millet drink) and the vendors of round *gevretsi* (small rings of bread); here a man was eating a melon near a sucking calf. I was always interested in those performing *pazarluk*, which was the method of clinching a bargain. The buyer and the seller of an animal would stand shaking hands as the seller demanded an unreasonably high

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

price, to which the buyer retorted with a ridiculously low price. As the two amounts approached each other the handshaking grew warmer and more rapid until finally the buyer and seller agreed on a sensible figure, at which time a third party added his hand to those of the other two. The third peasant, the witness of the sale, often enjoyed shouting as much as the principals. The bargain concluded, the men went to arrange a bill of sale, after which the newly purchased animal was led across the plain to its new home.

At this market in 1937 a sound young bull cost between twenty-five and thirty-five dollars; a fresh buffalo cow, between fifty and sixty dollars; ordinary cows brought slightly less, between thirty-five and forty-five dollars. Horses ranged from twelve to sixty dollars, while the humble donkey varied in value from twelve to eighteen dollars.

Not far away from the big cattle market, in the high-walled enclosure, was the sheep bazaar. There shepherds lolled in the shade with their flocks and waited for purchasers, often long in coming. This too was a municipal bazaar, and the peasants paid a small fee for the privilege of carrying on business there. Ordinarily a pair of sheep cost $3.60.

Near the Bridge of Lions spanning the narrow canal around Sofia was the mill which the people of Dragalevtsy had chosen to patronize. If they were tired out after their trip into the city, the villagers lay down on sacks of grain until their turns came. When at last they aroused themselves they were coated with a thin layer of flour dust which filled the air around the electrically operated machinery. In the mill courtyard the unyoked oxen rested beside the wagons, and chatting groups of women sat in the scanty shade.

From the Bridge of Lions there jutted off a narrow street lined with people displaying homegrown and homemade wares. This was the beginning of the general market which extended with innumerable side-street ramifications for several long blocks. This market did not really get into full swing until nine o'clock, owing to the drowsiness of Sofia housewives.

The real life of this market resided not so much in the great variety of products on sale as in the peasants: their dress, their immeasurable patience, and their childlike curiosity at strange things

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

such as a tourist's knickers or the cheap gay contents of the toy-sellers' pushcarts.

Each woman had something to sell: a few eggs, some blueberries picked up on the mountain, two or three chickens, a bag of peppers, strong-smelling buffalo butter, a bunch of carnations, white beans for which Dragalevtsy was especially known throughout this region, or a few walnuts. The woman's merchandise, piled on the sidewalk before her, was her excuse for coming to town.

It was around the next destination, the *Bezisten Pazar*, that fondest memories clung, because this was the spot near the Sofia flower bazaar where young people from surrounding villages went upon completing their morning duties in town. It was here that young men from one village met girls from other villages. During the afternoon, brightly dressed, giggling young couples promenaded in the sunshine while the older people, especially the men, gathered in the *"Dulgata Mehana,"* the tavern to which Dragalevtsy peasants were especially loyal. They lunched and drank, rested, and swapped their stories here. Nor was it without pride that they told how the late Fiodor Chaliapin, the celebrated opera singer, in 1934 spent a very merry evening in this same *"Dulgata Mehana."*

This weekly trip to town on Friday did surprisingly little to introduce changes to the village. Even while in the capital city, the peasants still lived in a peasant world. In the animal bazaar, for instance, there was little social conversation and little opportunity for a villager to widen his knowledge of urban life. Too often in this place he learned to distrust the city-dwellers through frequent dealings with the keen-witted, professional cattle merchant. In the mill he was still in a peasant world even though noisy machines foreign to his village ran at lightning speed. It was true that in the general market all types of Sofia citizenry passed in review, but the peasants' chief contact here was with the servant girls accompanying the housewives on the Friday shopping expedition. Even after finishing their little business in the general market, the village men and women found most enjoyment in being with other peasants. Few people of Dragalevtsy ventured on the city's main streets; even if they should have happened into a movie house, it would have been one on some